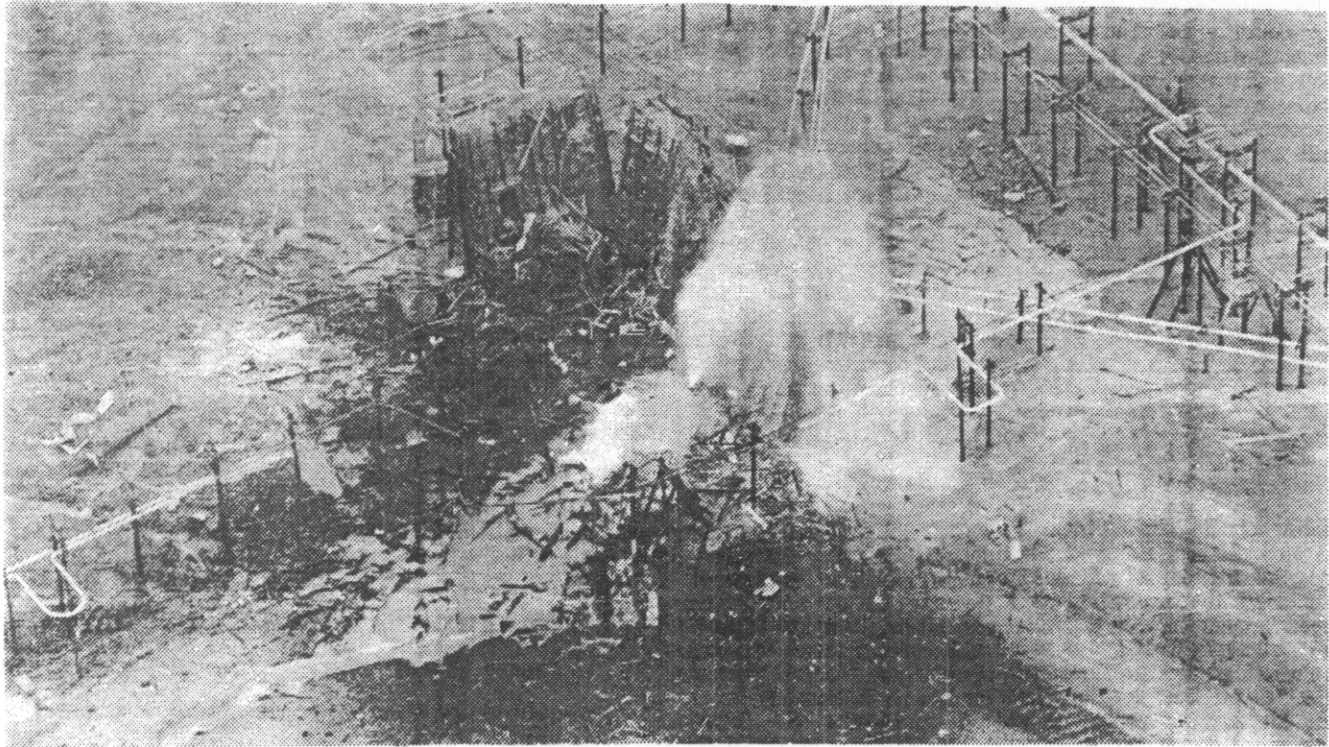


2 Men Injured as 2 Explosions, Fire Destroy Acid House at Volunteer Army Ammunition Plant

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BLAST AREA—This aerial photo shows the damage after two blasts at VAAP Friday where a trinitration building was destroyed. The structures are concrete barricades apparently designed to absorb force from any accidental explosions. Two persons were reported slightly injured.—(Staff photo by Delmont Wilson.)

By REX SANDERS

News-Free Press Staff Writer

Two men were reported slightly injured and production was interrupted when two explosions destroyed a trinitration (acid) house at the Volunteer Army Ammunition Plant early Friday afternoon.

The resulting fire from the blasts, occurring some 17 minutes apart, was brought under control by the VAAP Fire Department, although requested aid by officials of the Army complex was refused after it arrived.

Although damage and casualties turned out to be relatively light, it was at first feared that the first explosions might set off a chain reaction and destroy the entire complex, which is located at Tyner between Bonny Oaks Drive and Highway 58.

An Army news release said the initial explosion occurred about 1:30 p.m. and was classified as a "flash" or "low-order" detonation.

The release said the second or "high-order" explosion occurred approximately 17 minutes later.

Marcellus Worsham Yancey of Summerville, Ga., Rt. 2, and George Bradley Clark of 1408 Fore Drive in Cleveland were reportedly treated for minor burns and released from the plant hospital.

The men reportedly were operating the trinitration building at the time of the initial detonation.

Army officials said no estimate of the damage to the plant is available and that a board of inquiry will be appointed to investigate the cause of the accident.

Security measures at the plant were clamped down as soon as the explosions occurred and newsmen, at least five fire engines and Red Cross and Civil Defense personnel were denied entrance to the sprawling complex.

Chattanooga fire authorities reported that their aid was requested by VAAP officials and it was understood that some authorities were "irritated" when equipment arrived and was refused entrance.

The sprawling complex makes about 60 per cent of the TNT used by American forces in the Vietnam War and employs about 2,500 persons.

It has been producing TNT for the Vietnam War since 1966 under a government contract with Atlas Chemical Co.

The plant was built in the early 1940s for production of TNT during World War II and was known as the Volunteer Ordnance Works. It was reactivated for additional TNT production after the U.S. became

Officials declined to say how many tons of explosives are made annually at the plant, saying such information is "classified."

The two explosions were so severe that residents of homes as far away as three miles felt the blasts.

Gene Long of 6409 Bonny Oaks Drive said he heard only one explosion which "sounded pretty loud. I thought something had blown up here," said the service station attendant.

"I didn't have much idea what it might be until fire trucks went by," said Mr. Long. Harry L. Roberts of 7708 Basswood Drive, which is located about one-half mile from the plant side, said the first blast "jarred the kitchen and the second jarred the ground under my feet."

"We could just see the black smoke shoot up," he said.

C. L. Schroyer Jr., another resident of Basswood Drive, said he was standing in his driveway when the second blast went off and "it shook the whole place."

"The ground just trembled under my feet," said Mr. Schroyer. "We knew something had happened over there, but we didn't know what. We're used to stink, not noises," he quipped.

The severity of the explosions

shook the windows of Lakeside Elementary School, about three miles from the scene, and residents of Bal Harbor Subdivision, also about three miles away, were shaken by the explosions.

One woman who said she lives about five miles from the blast area said the blasts knocked several display dishes from a shelf in her home.

It was reported that several large windows in the former home of former Sheriff Rex Richey were broken by the force from the explosions.

Mrs. Roger W. Breyspraak, who lives near the ammunition plant, said the explosion (apparently the second one) "was one of the biggest I've ever heard."

"I thought the whole place had blown up," she said.

Mrs. Breyspraak said minor explosions are normal occurrences in the area but she had never experienced "anything like those."

The wife of a TVA health officers, Mrs. Breyspraak said she detected a "real acrid smell," nothing like the usual fumes from the plant operation.

The plant established a safety record on Dec. 17 when it passed the all-time high for the facility of operating 2.7 million man-hours without a lost-time accident.

Company officials said the blast injuries were so slight that the safety record is not in jeopardy.

Plant